

Top Predictors of Graduate Student Well-Being

Top Predictors of Satisfaction With Life

A common, validated measure of positive function, happiness and well-being.

Living Conditions
Career Prospects
Financial Confidence

Top Predictors of Depression

A validated measure of negative function used in psychiatric epidemiology.

Sleep
Overall Health
Academic Engagement

Overall 10 Top Predictors

By average standardized beta coefficient in Life Satisfaction & Depression models.

1. Career Prospects
2. Overall Health
3. Living Conditions
4. Academic Engagement
5. Social Support
6. Financial Confidence
7. Academic Progress & Preparation
8. Sleep
9. Feeling Valued & Included
10. Advisor Relationship

Verbatim

Concern with finances, social support, advising and career prospects were the most frequent topics in comments.

“The largest source of anxiety for me is my job outlook. It is tremendously uncertain and thus fear-inducing.”

“At Cal, we have some of the lowest graduate fellowships, and some of the highest living expenses.”

“I live on my own for the first time and it is very lonely. I wish there were more exciting ways to meet other grad students.”

“Professors should be required to take courses on mentorship and management.”

Demographics, Degrees & Fields

Lesbian, gay and bisexual grad students report lower well-being as do students of “other” race/ethnicity and older students. There is no well-being gap by gender or U.S. citizenship status.

About 47% of PhD students and 37% of Master’s and Professional students score as depressed. Students in the Arts & Humanities fare poorly on several indicators and 64% score as depressed.

Why Do We Care About Well-Being?

We care because we want to enable graduate students to do their best work and make the most of their time here. Balanced, happy people are more productive, more creative, more collaborative, better at long-term goal pursuit, more likely to find employment, more physically and psychologically resilient, and more.

Recommendations

1. Follow the roadmap provided by the top predictors
2. Promote well-being strategies recommended by students
3. Remove hassles and barriers to beneficial behaviors
4. Start a dialogue
5. Institutionalize the survey

The survey was conducted March 12-April 22, 2014 by the Graduate Assembly in partnership with Graduate Division. It was administered to a stratified random sample of 2,500 graduate students from across schools and colleges with academic and professional degree goals, with oversampling for underrepresented minority students. We received 790 responses for a 32% response rate. The top predictor models ($R^2 > .40$) were derived from a set of 30 candidate predictors and 10 demographic items. This is the first survey of graduate student well-being since 2004. **Download the full report at <http://ga.berkeley.edu/wellbeingreport>.**